

Sūrah 70

Al-Ma'ārij

(The Ascending Steps)

(Makkan Period)

Title

Its title is taken from the word *ma'ārij* which occurs in verse 3 of this *Sūrah*.

Period of Revelation

In light of its contents, it seems that it must have been sent down in the same period in which *Sūrah al-Hāqqah* was revealed.

Subject Matter and Themes

This *Sūrah* admonishes and delivers a note of warning to those disbelievers who used to mock the tidings about the Resurrection, the Hereafter, Paradise, and Hell. They used to challenge the Prophet (peace be upon him) to expedite the chastisement of the Resurrection, if he was true, and if they deserved to be consigned to Hellfire. The whole *Sūrah* constitutes a response to their above challenge.

At the outset, it is affirmed that as the disbelievers seek the divine punishment to be expedited, they are destined to undergo it. Once it overwhelms them, no one will be able to protect them from it. However, it will strike them only at its appointed time. It might take some time, but they are bound to be recompensed for their disbelief. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is advised to have patience and bear with their mocking. The divine chastisement is imminent and at hand, though they regard it as a far off, remote happening.

The disbelievers are told that the Resurrection, which they take as the butt of their mockery, is something formidable and horrendous. The sinners will undergo a real ordeal then. Exasperated, they will be more than willing to offer their wives, children and kith, and kin as ransom in order to escape divine punishment. However, nothing will help them in averting their recompense.

Mankind is clearly told that on the Day of Judgement, everyone's fate will be decided while taking into account their belief, conduct, and record of deeds. Those who disregarded the truth in this world, amassed a huge amount of wealth, and withheld it from those in need will deserve Hellfire. In contrast, those who feared the chastisement of God, firmly believed in the Afterlife, regularly offered prayers, discharged the rights of the poor and needy out of their wealth, shunned immoral and evil deeds, did not betray trusts, kept their word, and testified to the truth will get an honourable place in Paradise.

Finally, the Makkan disbelievers who thronged to mock at the Prophet (peace be upon him) are warned that if they do not give up, God will replace them with other people. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is advised not to bother about their ridiculing him. If they are determined to face disgrace in the Hereafter, he should allow them to indulge in their vain pursuits. Soon will they confront their abhorrent end.